

An outline of the basic theories in western architectural history

Kim Soo-yeon^{1, a, *}, Choi Yoo-chun^{1, b,}

¹The Commercial Press (Hong Kong) Limited, 13th Floor, Central Building, 8 Queen's Road Central, Hong Kong, 0000, China

a.sooyeon_52145687@icloud.com, b.choimr94and0202@yahoo.com

***Corresponding Author**

Abstract: This article explores the foundational theories of Western architectural history and their development, focusing on three main research approaches: the art history approach, the historical and philosophical approach, and the relationship between architectural views and historical views at the level of architectural theory. The article first introduces the origins and theoretical prerequisites of Western architectural history, emphasizing the profound influence of art theory and philosophy on the field. It then discusses the evolution of foundational theoretical issues in architectural history, pointing out the academic differences between architecture and art, as well as the interdisciplinary nature of architectural historical research. The article also analyzes issues related to architectural historiography, including the regionality of architectural history and the complexity of cultural exchanges, as well as the critique of Eurocentrism. Furthermore, the article explores the diversity of research methods in architectural history, including historical and philosophical approaches, and emphasizes the importance of the research subject in architectural historical studies.

Keywords: Architectural History, Art History Approach, Historical and Philosophical Approach, Interdisciplinary Research

1. Introduction

There are roughly three research approaches to the foundational theories of foreign architectural history. The first is the path of art history. D. Watkin's book "The Rise of Architectural History" (1980) [1] elaborates that when Western architectural history research began to rise, its theoretical premise came from art theory, and its research methods were essentially the same as those of art style history. Since the development of art history is synchronized with aesthetics, Western architectural history research has been deeply influenced by philosophical thinking, especially German classical philosophy, from an early stage. The artistic and philosophical dimensions of architectural history have become an important part of the foundational theories of Western architectural history. The second approach is to propose the logical questions of the foundational theories of architectural history from the discourse of historical and scientific philosophy. Dana Arnold's "Reading Architectural History" (2002) [2] compiles thematic papers on historical and scientific philosophy, thereby systematically discussing the foundational theoretical issues of architectural history, including the nature of historiography, the nature of architecture, the nature of architectural history, as well as the theory of architectural historiography, interdisciplinary cultural research in architectural history, and research methods in architectural history, etc. In this regard, the work of the Greek architectural theorist Panayotis Tournikiotis, "The Historiography of Modern Architecture" [3], is particularly evident. The third is to establish the relationship between architectural views and historical views at the level of architectural theory, thus forming the foundational theories of architectural history. For example, Hazel Conway and Rowan Roenisch's co-authored "Understanding Architecture: An Introduction to Architecture and Architectural History" (2005) [4] systematically considers many interrelated issues of architectural theory and the foundational theories of architectural history. Most modern architectural historians have built the foundational theories of architectural history from the perspective of architectural theory, such as Bruno Zevi's "Architecture as Space" and Giedion's "Space, Time and Architecture". In this regard, Schultz's series of research is the most typical.

2. Overview of the basic theories of western architectural history

In 1980, the British scholar D. Watkin's book "The Rise of Architectural History"[5] systematically introduced the development of Western architectural history. It can be seen from this that there is a historical evolution of the basic theoretical issues in Western architectural history. When Western architectural history research began to rise, its theoretical premise came from art theory, and its research methods were essentially the same as those of art style history. The book "The Historiography of Modern Architecture" summarizes and criticizes this research path, stating:

The interests of those art historians are in the visual sensations of form, space, and volume. Their foundation is a deterministic philosophy of history from which they confirm a set of social, ethical, and cultural interpretations of architecture. ... Their genealogy tends to lack functional and structural elements, which are undoubtedly the foundation of modern architecture. ... Free plan, Pilotis, and the most important relationships between form, function, material, and structural technology are generally very lacking in their texts, or are treated from an aesthetic point of view. [6]

This profoundly reveals the deep academic differences between art history and architectural history in the process of Western architectural development. Architecture is directly linked to social, economic, and political conditions, determining the actual spatial places for human existence; while art is not required to determine architectural space issues strictly according to functionality or structure [7].

In the development process of modern Western architectural history, with the help of the rich and excellent cultural theories in Western civilization (semiotics, hermeneutics, phenomenology, anthropology, art theory, historical philosophy, scientific philosophy, etc.) and the profound achievements of architectural theory, research work on the basic theories of architectural history has been carried out, such as the aforementioned British scholar Dana Arnold's "Reading Architectural History" and the co-authored "Understanding Architecture: An Introduction to Architecture and Architectural History" by British scholars Hazel Conway and Rowan Roenisch. However, overall, as the author of "The Historiography of Modern Architecture" said: "The history of architectural history has not yet been written," referring to the history of Western academia on architectural history, that is, the history of architectural history, there is still no systematic result. Because the history of architectural history is not only a compilation of researchers and works, but also a reflection and evolution of the theories and methods contained in the research process of architectural history. Accordingly, the basic theories of architectural history are also in the stage of exploration and development.

2.1. Issues in architectural historiography

British architectural historian Bruce Allsopp, in the first chapter "View of Architectural History" of his book "A General History of Architecture," writes: "Architectural history should not be seen merely as a series of brief climaxes when 'style' is in its most perfect form. Architectural history is a series of transformations... Old history books reveal the apparent gradual progress of various styles, not only by imposing the concepts of the Renaissance period on various periods, but also by selectively choosing the methods they want, and sometimes even by concealing evidence." "No modern country can claim that its architectural history is limited to itself. The architectural history of the United States cannot be understood from its own perspective; it must be studied like Europe. There is a lot of French and Italian architecture in British architecture. Even Italy cannot claim that its architectural history is entirely its own." [8] Such a view of architectural history not only negates the singular art history of architecture but also denies the continuity and singular regularity of architectural history development in terms of time, and emphasizes the complexity of exchanges in the regional development of architectural history, strengthening the dissemination and exchange of various cultures in the long river of architectural history. The architectural historiography issues reflected in the book "Fletcher's History of Architecture" are also quite representative. From the 4th to the 16th edition of the book, European historical architectural styles were called "historical styles," while Oriental historical architectural styles were called "non-historical styles," and this view of architectural history was represented by the picture of the "tree of architecture." Fletcher also specifically elaborated on his understanding of Oriental architectural style in the preface of the 4th edition of the book: "The characteristics presented by Oriental art are often unfamiliar, unpleasant, and even very strange to Europeans. Faced with so many forms that are almost grotesque to us, we should understand that the

differences between the East and the West are emphasized in Oriental architecture due to religious beliefs and social customs." These constitute the so-called Eurocentric view of architectural history. However, after the 19th edition of the book, not only were the architectural contents of the Eastern countries and regions increased and rewritten, but also the pictures related to Eurocentrism were deleted, and this view of architectural history was largely corrected in the book.

2.2. Diversity and impact of research methods in architectural history

In the study of foundational theories in architectural history, the works of German scholar Krufft's "History of Western Architectural Theory" and British scholar Capp's "Architectural Theory" are quite representative, each reflecting different approaches to the study of the history of architectural theory. The former employs a historical method, which involves "the collection and study of relevant literature, various statements related to the context in which these documents were written, and the relative value constituted by these statements." The latter uses a philosophical method, which is "to study and discuss things within a particular structure through a series of rational arguments, and to establish a hierarchical concept system through which the subject can be understood." [9] "Fletcher's History of Architecture," initially established its basic historiographical research path through a comprehensive comparative method of architectural style history, and its early title was "A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method." This method of architectural historical research has had a significant academic and architectural educational impact during the architectural trends of eclecticism and revivalism. As Mr. Luo Xiaowei summarized: "Since the end of the 18th century... people were no longer satisfied with 'systematized' classicism, but were eager to delve into various historical periods and local style details that took pride in various forms of revivalism and eclecticism. 'Fletcher's History of Architecture'... has become an encyclopedia of architectural styles, from which the imaginative can draw inspiration, and the less imaginative can copy without fault, so much so that it has become popular in the architectural community, with one copy per person. This fervor lasted until the 1930s and 1940s of the 20th Century, when the trend of modern architecture gradually replaced revivalism and eclecticism, and then gradually cooled down." [10] The aforementioned British architectural historian Bruce Allsopp, in his article "View of Architectural History," says: "What are we doing in the study of architectural history? We are standing here and now, and looking back at the past. We have a certain perspective, which we will use as the starting point for our research plan. From our perspective, all of history comes before us, and from other perspectives, architecture may be completely different." [11] This clearly emphasizes the important role of the research subject in the study of architectural history, and the thought premises of the subject itself can be clearly reflected upon, directly determining whether the methods of architectural historical research can be consciously and appropriately applied. The article does not elaborate on this, but it is clear that it is permeated with many thought paths of analytical historical philosophy and postmodern historical philosophy. The article also emphasizes that although architectural history is highly comprehensive, its unique characteristics and modes of interpretation cannot be dominated by other disciplines: "Archaeology and ancient architectural history are not the same thing. Due to the confusion of the two, some mistakes have been made. Archaeology provides data, but based on architecture, it does not always provide the correct interpretation." [12]

2.3. Theoretical innovation in western architectural history

The development of Western architectural history is enriched by philosophical, artistic, and historical theoretical resources, making the reflection on the foundational theoretical issues of architectural history from a meta-theoretical level an important aspect of recent research in this field. Dana Arnold's "Reading Architectural History" (2002) is a collection of relevant thematic papers, supplemented by the author's own research, systematically discussing the foundational theoretical issues of architectural history, including the nature of historiography, the nature of architecture, the nature of architectural history, as well as the theory of architectural historiography, interdisciplinary cultural research in architectural history, and examples of research methods in architectural history, etc. The book actively incorporates the latest achievements in Western philosophical and historical theories, discussing the subject nature of postmodern historiography. This represents a direct response from Western architectural history to the theoretical achievements of postmodern historical philosophers such as Hayden White and Michel de Certeau—their core theoretical

propositions are critically absorbed at the level of architectural history. However, this critical absorption has not yet been clearly reflected in the practice of compiling architectural history, and further research is anticipated (domestic research on the foundational theories of architectural history needs to respond effectively and positively to this; at the same time, our own historical traditions also need to be systematically and profoundly transformed and absorbed). In the final part of the preface, the author directly states his viewpoint, striving to liberate from positivism and form a diversified and critically reflective view of architectural history. This point is of great significance for Chinese architectural history and is one of the effective starting points for our conscious reflection and global dialogue. Hazel Conway and Rowan Roenisch's co-authored "Understanding Architecture: An Introduction to Architecture and Architectural History" (2005) systematically considers the many interrelated issues between architectural theory and the foundational theories of architectural history. The book dedicates a chapter to discussing the nature of architectural history, the theory of historiography in architectural history, the history and development of Western architectural history, theory and architectural history, the discourse of architectural history, and the relationship between buildings, architects, and architectural history. The authors summarize these contents into several basic questions: "What is architectural history, how has this discipline developed, how is it applied, and how can we understand it" [13]. On the question of "What is architectural history," the authors attach great importance to the fundamental impact of historical theory on the nature of architectural history, while the influence of the discipline of architecture itself on the nature of architectural history mainly lies in the special nature of the evidence it provides and its corresponding professional skills in evaluation:

Architectural history, like other histories, understands and seeks various explanations about the past. Its difference lies in the nature of the available evidence and the advanced techniques for evaluating this evidence. Any historical research must collect facts at its initial stage. To understand these facts, they must be filtered, sorted, assessed, interpreted, and contextualized. ...

2.4. Evidence in architectural history

History is dedicated to understanding the past in a critical manner, encompassing both its negative and positive significance. It is a dynamic process rather than a static one; history presents the present before us and is itself a part of this dynamic process, allowing us to understand the past. History is not a jigsaw puzzle that can be assembled and disassembled at will. We continually reawaken the same themes with new questions, and historical interpretations always leave the door open for further interpretation... Studying the past helps us understand how we have arrived at the present and gives us insight into the creation and use of the built environment.

Historians must use evidence to understand what happened and why. In architectural history, this evidence appears in the form of physical remains of buildings or their artifacts, as well as in documentary forms such as plans, drawings, narratives, journals, or accounts. Our grasp of the architectural historical context of any given period [14] stems from a wealth of information, including paintings, literary works, contracts, buildings, and other surviving artifacts. ... They are historical facts, but merely facts alone; even monumental facts like the pyramids are only the initial stage of any historical research. These facts can only tell us much when they are evaluated, contextualized, and interpreted. Different historians may provide different assessments of the same facts, and the emergence of new evidence may revise or change existing theories and interpretations. [15]

Overall, at the foundational theoretical level of Western architectural history, works such as "Fletcher's History of Architecture" and other general historical treatises mostly deal with the theoretical issues of the objects of architectural history, while a few works like "The Historiography of Modern Architecture" reflect the emphasis on foundational theory in Western architectural history. The theoretical and practical significance demonstrated by these works will have a significant impact on the development of related disciplines in architectural history, as well as on the development of architectural historiography, architectural views, and architectural criticism. "The Historiography of Modern Architecture" analyzes the theoretical achievements of nine modern architectural historians: Schultz's contemplation on the foundational theories of Western architectural history; Coughlin's "Architectural Criticism—Modern Architecture and Historical Change," which discusses the views and reflective application of foundational theoretical issues in architectural history; and Frampton's "Studies in Tectonic Culture" and "Modern

Architecture: A Critical History," among other works, which dissect various architectural theories (with a focus on modern architectural theory) and the historical views behind them, etc., clearly demonstrate Western architectural history's reflection and active response to various historical theories, and further show the academic critical power possessed by different architectural theories.

Taking Colquhoun's preface to "Architectural Criticism - Modern Architecture and Historical Change" as an example, it grasps the development of architectural theory by combing the main context of general history, clearly reflecting the intrinsic connection between architectural history and architectural theory. At the same time, it can accurately grasp and analyze the relationship between architectural theory in this context and cultural thought, thereby revealing the complex relationship between the deep social and cultural background of buildings and architectural science and the development of art. This level of reflection in thought is closely combined with the premise analysis of historical view, which clearly indicates that the historical context of architectural theory also needs to start from its own (historical view) reflection in order to effectively provide a dialogue foundation for various object theories (such as architectural typology, architectural semiotics, etc.). Precisely because of this, Western architectural history research has always maintained an equal and synchronized dialogue and exchange with the cutting-edge theoretical and architectural discourse of the times at the level of basic theory, thus forming a stable balance and free innovation in the academic vitality between the critical inheritance of tradition and the critical reflection of the significance of the times.

2.5. Architectural history as inspiration

On the issue of the significance of architectural history, Western architectural historians have a clear sense of questions and research approaches. As cited above, British architectural historian Bruce Allsopp, in the first chapter "View of Architectural History" of his book "A General History of Architecture," discusses the significance of the study of architectural history: "We care about architectural history, partly for its own sake; but mainly as a means of gaining wisdom; as a means of better understanding ourselves and our architecture; as a basis for correct judgment and evaluation; and thus contributing to design." [16] Western architectural history research includes an academic tradition of comprehensively examining architectural theory, architectural history, and contemporary concepts. For example, in the first chapter of Giedion's "Space, Time, and Architecture," there is a discussion topic on "The Historian and the Present," in which he begins by saying, "Historians, especially architectural historians, must keep in close touch with the ideas of their time." "He must understand the spirit of his own age so thoroughly that he can see past ages, which previous generations have not noticed, clearly." [17] Giedion's discussion combines architecture and architectural history, giving his own views on the significance of history, which actually involves issues of historical hermeneutics and historiography as well as architectural theory, and is worth understanding in depth systematically to explore the modes of thinking and value judgments within. In the final chapter of "Architecture as Space," by Sevi, titled "Striving for Architectural Historical Research with Modern Significance," it is pointed out even more clearly:

If modern architecture is necessary to help architectural history possess its creative spirit, then the reformed architectural history is even more necessary to contribute to the formation of a higher degree of civilization. As long as the history of architecture cannot break through the framework of philology and archaeology, not only can the past architecture not expect to obtain a sincere historical attitude from the current reality, but it also cannot arouse people's interest and vivid emotions. [18]

3. A brief analysis of Schulz's basic theories in architectural history

Christian Norberg-Schulz has made unique and significant contributions to the foundational theories of Western architectural history. Influenced by Heidegger's philosophical reflections on the nature of architecture, Schulz integrated phenomenology and existential philosophy with semiotics and hermeneutics to comprehensively and systematically explore the meaning of architecture, the nature of architectural history, and the nature of history itself. These explorations were implemented in his research on the history of Western architecture, with his seminal work "The Meaning of Architecture" being a prime example. In the book, he offers insights into the nature of architectural history, suggesting that:

The history of architecture depicts the development and use of architectural symbol systems. In this way, it becomes a part of cultural history, which can generally be defined as the history of meaningful or symbolic forms. Thus, the history of architecture also becomes the history of existential possibilities.

There are two parallel historical threads: the material history of buildings and their use, and the conceptual history of symbol systems representing possible existences. The former reflects a mutable process, where solutions can be "simple" or "refined" depending on the specific circumstances; the latter clarifies the general increase in knowledge and capabilities. Only by viewing architecture as the concretization of existential space can we understand how individual works affect the general development of culture. The development of culture does not necessarily mean that the world becomes better or people become happier; it undoubtedly means an expansion of human choice capabilities. Therefore, history can be defined as the growth of understandable meaning. [19]

This perspective on architectural history encompasses profound theoretical insights into both history and architecture. It emphasizes the importance of understanding architectural history not just as a chronicle of styles but as a narrative of how human beings have found their "footing in space" under different conditions, which helps us to cultivate sensitivity to environmental characteristics and to profoundly understand the relationship between people and their environment. [23]

Schulz's work has had a profound impact on Western architectural theory, urban planning theory, and even landscape theory, primarily at the level of historical interpretation. His theories have been critically absorbed and reflect a direct response to the theoretical achievements of postmodern historical philosophers such as Hayden White and Michel de Certeau, contributing to the ongoing dialogue and innovation in the field of architectural history.

3.1. Multifaceted views in architectural history

Such a view of architectural history encompasses profound historical and architectural theoretical connotations. First, it establishes the basic nature of architectural history: "The history of architecture depicts the development and use of architectural symbol systems." "Architectural history also becomes the history of existential possibilities." Second, it clarifies the relationship between architectural history and cultural history: "It forms a part of cultural history, which can generally be defined as the history of meaningful or symbolic forms." Third, there are two parallel historical threads in architectural history: one is the material history of buildings and their use, and the other is the history of ideas about existential possibilities expressed through symbol systems. This insight is very important! The physicality and functional practicality of architecture have always been the basic objects of study in architecture and architectural history, and the symbolic and meaningful issues of architectural environment and spatial expression are even more the core fields of architecture and architectural history. In Schulz's view, the former is a variable process in the long river of history, which can be a simple or refined solution to specific problems, while the latter is a process of increasing knowledge and ability. In the latter process, as the "history of existential possibilities," it is actually the very important concept of "existential space" in Schulz's architectural theory directly manifested in the dimension of historical time.

Similarly, under such a view of architectural history and historical context, there is a specific historical theory. He said, "Only on the theoretical basis of regarding architecture as the concretization of existential space can we understand how individual works affect the general development of culture; and the development of culture does not necessarily mean that the world becomes better or people become happier, it undoubtedly means an expansion of human choice capabilities. Therefore, history can be defined as the growth of understandable meaning. History can be defined as the growth of understandable meaning."

Based on such architectural and historical theories, corresponding basic research methods in architectural history are formed: its foundation is a theory that regards architecture as the concretization of existential space, its core lies in the spatial attributes of the works or groups of works discussed, and its purpose is to carry out a structural analysis of different environmental levels, pointing out the patterns of places, paths, and domains, as well as the interactions between various levels. Structural analysis must also include an examination of the expressiveness of form and its importance for universal characteristics. This examination aims to explain architectural forms with a specific concretization of existential meaning, and

then to define them precisely from cultural, social, and material perspectives, and finally to evaluate architecture in connection with historical context and cultural traditions.

Architectural history research based on the above methods aims to provide a precise definition and understanding of the basic symbol system, and to describe how these elements are interrelated to form a highly abstract architectural language. This language includes not only a series of related motifs but also typical ways of spatial organization. [20]

3.2. Pluralism in architectural history methods

Schultz's basic methods for architectural history research have two important characteristics: First, they acknowledge the diversity of ways to grasp and interpret architectural historical characteristics. Second, they emphasize the fundamental role of the researcher in the process of experiencing the possibilities of existence in historical environments or spaces, thereby fostering empathy and respect for others' understanding activities. [21]

Schultz has proposed two types of semiotics research methods for Western architectural history, which are quite inspiring: one is the descriptive semiotics system, and the other is the non-descriptive semiotics system. The distinction between the two actually refers to how to understand and use scientific, philosophical thought resources and artistic, religious resources in architectural history research - similar to Cassirer's semiotic ideas. Such a methodological analysis of architectural history is essential as a technical link or research medium that emphasizes the researcher's own spatial experience and the environment in which they are located, and as a basic method for grasping the "history of possibilities of existence"; it is also the necessary path from truly grasping the relationship between oneself and the environment, gradually moving towards others, and towards the social-intellectual world. [22]

With the above-mentioned established premises and effective research paths in architectural history, the research objectives of architectural history are very clear:

...The history of architecture tells how people have found a "foothold in space" under different conditions, which can help us re-cultivate sensitivity to environmental characteristics and enable us to understand the relationship between people and the environment more profoundly. [23]

Schultz's pioneering achievements in Western architectural history research are mainly at the theoretical level of historical interpretation in architectural history, and the method of determining historical facts in architectural history is not the focus of his work. They have profoundly influenced Western architectural theory, urban planning theory, and even landscape theory.

4. Essentials of modern architectural history theories

The book "The Historiography of Modern Architecture" by Greek scholar Panayotis Tournikiotis focuses on the study of modern architectural historical research texts (treatises) completed by Western architectural historians, including architectural theorists. It provides a comprehensive and systematic study from the perspectives of historical writing and architectural theory. In this process, it also systematically elaborates on the basic theoretical issues of architectural history. The book mainly unfolds around the basic historical issues related to the study of modern architectural history and focuses on analyzing the important historical texts of architectural historians themselves, which is of great inspirational significance for the research work of the basic theories of Chinese architectural history.

The book is dedicated to exploring the historiographical theories of modern architectural history, providing a systematic analysis of many fundamental issues in this field, such as the nature of architectural history as a language; historical texts and discourse, purposes, premises, interpretations; the relationship between architectural history and architecture, history, architects and history, architecture, and so on. These analyses cover the main content of Western architectural historical research, providing us with up-to-date information on the research trends in Western architectural history and the contemporary academic perspective, which is of great reference value.

By selecting, comparing, and analyzing classic texts of modern architectural history, the author raises a very important question in the basic theory of architectural history: "The question is precisely... to explore the contribution of architectural historical research to the determination and elaboration of architectural theory, and more importantly, to identify and determine the transformation of meaning within the content of

architectural theory and history." [25] In other words, it is necessary to clarify what kind of significance architectural historical research can produce for architectural theory, and to clarify what kind of connection can be established between traditional architectural history and future architectural creative practice.

What is the significance of architectural history research for architectural theory? How can this significance be obtained? The author's thinking is as follows: "To explore the contribution of architectural historical research to the determination and elaboration of architectural theory, and more importantly, to identify and determine the transformation of meaning within the content of architectural theory and history... to seek those transformations of meaning that do not occur through differences in form, construction methods, and patterns, but through the discursive changes on which architecture is based, or through the fragmented practical activities based on the grasp of surface forms and materials." [26] The author also points out the pioneers who have made efforts in this direction, such as Banham, Collins, and Tafuri. [27]

Regarding the issue of the linguistic nature of architectural history, the book differs from the general understanding of dividing it into schematic language, image language, and documentary language. Instead, it proposes the "historical discourse" of architectural history (absorbing Foucault's theory of discourse), which distinguishes it from "architectural discourse." This well solves the problem of differences between architectural history and architecture. The so-called "historical discourse," the author says, "is a discourse that is interpreted from a clearly defined position, wrapped in a certain scholarly style, and accompanied by careful citation of materials, thereby ensuring its unquestionable authority in the field of history. This is a kind of discourse that narrates real events within a more widely accepted conceptual field of the discipline." [28] This includes: the use of historical materials in architectural history must be rigorous, ensuring its authority in the use of materials required by historical scientific methods; historical discourse has a strong characteristic of academic research, rather than being a makeshift measure for general architectural criticism or design; therefore, it demands the authenticity of events and corresponding systematic narration.

The historical texts of modern architectural history determined by the author have a historical discourse structure, and the author has proposed three directions for research: [28]

4.1. The direction of history

The historical concept based on the relationship between the past, present, and future of architecture.

4.2. The social direction

The relationship between the image of architecture and social needs, in other words, the characteristic path of changes in architecture and society that are expressed together, which is largely a matter of what the author can commit to.

4.3. The direction of architectural studies

The methods upon which the essence of architecture relies—whether it can be projected into the future—are integrated into the text. To some extent, the other two directions are more or less dependent on this direction. [29]

Regarding the attitude towards architectural historical facts, the author says in the concluding remarks of the "Introduction" of the book: "The confirmation of historical facts also determines how we view the past. We should also be reconciled with the past, because we should become more familiar with it and place it more clearly in our current architectural creation. This path, the essence of its interior, is the interest in contemporary architecture." [30]

Chapter 8, "Modern Architectural Studies and the Writing of Architectural History," serves as a summary of the entire book, reflecting the author's views on the history of architectural history: History and theory have become a singular entity, which includes: (1) a position on the nature of architecture; (2) a historical concept (philosophy), through which a view of the entire history of architecture is obtained; (3) a canonical element grid, which also weaves a structure of historical interpretation, and rules for the production of upcoming architecture; and (4) a social process. These four dimensions will create a textual architectural program, the function of which is to serve as a theoretical guide for architects. [31]

The four aspects summarized here are actually the core of the basic theory of architectural history in the book. The first point, the understanding of the nature of architecture, and the second point, the understanding of the nature of history, are the basic questions of architectural and historical theory. The third point, the so-called "canonical element grid," is the standard, dimension, or element of architectural historical judgment, which is concretized from the first two points. They form the vocabulary of ideological consciousness and value, as well as the vocabulary of architectural form. Based on this, one can determine the characteristics of different architectural historians in their work of writing architectural history. These characteristics are divided into two major categories: the structure of historical interpretation (Architecture A or Grid A) and the rules of architectural form composition (Architecture B or Grid B). These two categories of elements form different grid layers, and by overlaying and analyzing them, the basic understanding of the architectural historical text can be completed. The fourth point is to examine the attitude and strategy of the "historical discourse" of architectural historical texts in the face of the significance of the times, as seen in the aforementioned content, which has always been the research content faced by Western architectural historians. In summary, these four dimensions actually encompass the dimension of how historical theory and architectural theory form the basic theory of architectural history themselves - in the author's own words, "These four dimensions will create a textual architectural program, the function of which is to serve as a theoretical guide for architects."

On this basis, the author points out that the study of the modern architectural movement must have a historical perspective or historical thinking [32], and the establishment of the meaning of modern architecture also requires historical research, which is the fundamental significance of architectural history:

People cannot separate modern architecture from the cognition of historical changes, nor from the historicity on which it is based, thereby establishing a certain significance for the existence of modern architecture and new architecture. Historians and critics of the modern architectural movement belong to those who are among the first to interpret the historical existence of this world, as well as the authenticity of this world - the same historical existence, in one way or another, dominates or influences all trends of contemporary architecture. [33]

5. Conclusion

Due to the limitations in accessing Western architectural literature, the preliminary sorting out of the basic theoretical research situation of Western architectural history is inevitably incomplete and imperfect in terms of content and problem classification, which requires more systematic supplementation and improvement in the future. Our intention here is merely to spark discussion, aiming to promote a conscious emphasis on the basic theoretical research of architectural history.

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